

Message Text

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ACTION SS-20

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 IO-14 EB-11 A-01 DRC-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 /070 W
----- 096629

R 111112Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6951

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 8391

MBE.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD

SUBJECT: EFFECTIVENESS IN OVERSEAS COMMERCIAL FUNCTION

REF: A. 239800; B. VIENTIANE 3719;

C. VIENTIANE 5186

BEGIN SUMMARY. POST RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING
COMMERCIAL FUNCTIONS INCLUDE THE ADOPTION OF A
MISSION-WIDE APPROACH TO THIS SUBJECT, CONCERNING EFFORTS
OF ALL AGENCIES, THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GREATER TRAVEL
BY US BUSINESS EXECUTIVES, DIVISION OF THE ECONOMIC/
COMMERCIAL PERSONNEL COME INTO TWO SECTIONS, AND
THE
INDOCTRINATION OF ALL US PERSONNEL ABROAD TO SUPPORT AMERICAN BUSI-
NESS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST FOR SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
TO STRENGTHEN COMMERCIAL FUNCTIONS, IT IS SUGGESTED
THAT VIENTIANE'S COORDINATED MISSION-WIDE APPROACH
TO PROMOTING AMERICAN BUSINESS MAY BE WORTHY OF IMITATION
IN WHOLE OR IN PART AT SIMILAR POSTS. THE DIRECTOR OF
USAID/LAOS IS ALSO COUNSELOR FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND
KEEPS CLOSELY INFORMED AND ACTIVE IN REGARD TO
INDUSTRIAL, FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS IN THE
COUNTRY AND IS FREQUENTLY CONSULTED BY VISITING
AS WELL AS LOCAL AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN. THE EMBASSY'
COMMERCIAL OFFICER HAS EFFECTIVELY ORGANIZED THE
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RESOURCES OF THE COMMERCIAL SECTION TO PROVIDE INCREASED
SERVICES TO US BUSINESSMEN IN ANTICIPATION OF EXPANDING

US BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN LAOS DURING THE POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD. THE USAID MISSION ITSELF DEVOTES CONSIDERABLE PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES TO THE COMMERCIAL EFFORT, AIDING US BUSINESSMEN THROUGH PROVIDING REGULAR AND SPECIAL ECONOMIC REPORTS INCLUDING PRICE DATA, TRADE STATISTICS, TAX INFORMATION AND INFORMATION ON LOCAL INVESTMENT REGULATIONS AND PRACTICES, PARTICIPATING IN THE FORMATIVE STAGES OF RLG COMMERCIAL REGULATIONS SUCH AS THE INVESTMENT CODE, ASSEMBLING INFORMATION ON INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN LAOS, AND ASSISTING US FIRMS XKDDING ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. USIS REGULARLY DISTRIBUTES INFORMATION ON US AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL EVENTS. KEY RLG OFFICIALS, BUSINESSMEN AND LOCAL NEWS MEDIA, INCLUDING THE USIS PUBLICATION "ECONOMIC IMPACT", AND PROMOTES TOURISM TOTHE UNITED STATES THROUGH EXHIBITS AT BE ANNUAL THAT LUANG FAIR. A LOCAL COMMERCIAL NEWSLETTER BE PRODUCED AND

DISTRIBUTED THROUGHT THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF EMBASSY, USIS AND USAID PERSONNEL.

2. ALTHOUGH LAOS IS NOT A BIG MARKET AND THE FXTENT OF US BUSINESS INTERESTS HEJN DOES NOT WARRANT THE FORMATION OF A LOCAL AMERICAN CHANBER OF COMMERCE, SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE MISSION INCLUDING THE AMBASSADOR, TYE DCM, AND THE ECONOMIC COUNSELOR MEET FREQUENTLY WITH AMERICAN ZESINESSMEN AND LOCAL REPRESENTA-TIVES OF US FIRMS. SUCH PERSONAL CONTACTS OFFER A MORE EFFECTIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND INFORMATION THENWOULD AN OCCASIONAL SPEECH BEFORE A MORE FORMAL BUSINESS ADUIENCE. THESE EFFORTS ARE NOT RESTRICTED TO AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN ONLY, BUT INCLUDE ALL LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES AND DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICAN PRODUCTS. WHEN THE ECONOMIC COUNSELOR GAVE A DINNER RECENTLY TO INTRODUCE THESE BUSINESSMEN TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR THERE WERE SOME 8 OR 9 DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES REPRESENTED. SENIOR OFFICIALS ALSO
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PARTICIPATE IN VISTS TO LOCAL FACTORIESM0 8,;3 58GATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SALE OF US EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES.

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ACTION SS-20

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3. ALSO WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION IS THE STIMULATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT BY THE US GOVERNMENT OF GREATER TRAVEL BY SENIOR AND MID-LEVEL US BUSINESS EXECUTIVES IN ASIA. PERSONAL CONTACT IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT IN THIS REGION THAN CORRESPONDENCE AND WOULD INSURE A BETTER LOCAL RECEPTION FOR US FIRMS AND PRODUCTS.

4. ON A WORLD-WIDE BASIS, CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE SEPARATION OF THE ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL PERSONNEL CONE FOR FSO'S INTO TWO DISTINCT SECTIONS FOR PURPOSES OF SELECTION FOR PROMOTION. AGGRESSIVE PROMOTION OF US COMMERCIAL INTERESTS MAY REQUIRE ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT SKILLS AND ABILITIES ON THE PART OF FSO'S FROM THOSE NEEDED FOR CAUTIOUS AND PRECISE ECONOMIC ANALYSES, AND IT WOULD APPEAR THAT JUDGING BOTH PERFORMANCES BY THE SAME YARDSTICK WOULD BE NEITHER EQUITABLE NOR CONDUCIVE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERTISE IN EITHER FIELD.

5. FINALLY, ALL PERSONNEL OF THE US GOVERNMENT WHO SERVE ABROAD SHOULD BE STRONGLY IMBUED WITH THE NECESSITY OF PROMOTING US COMMERCIAL INTERESTS, EVEN THOUGH MANY OF THEM MAY BE ENGAGED IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOP THE ECONOMIES OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES. THE NEED TO KEEP US INTERESTS UPPERMOST IN MIND UNDERSCORES THE VALUE OF A COORDINATED MISSION-WIDE APPROACH TO
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COMMERCIAL WORK SUCH AS IS PRACTICED IN LAOS.
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